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Lexington Books
2019-08-27

Miklóssy , K & Miloiu , S 2019 , Interactive Strategic Cultures : Romania and Moldova . in K Miklossy & H Smith (eds) , Strategic Culture in Russia's neighborhood : Change and Continuity in an In-Between Space . 1 edn , Lexington Books , New York - London , pp. 117-140 .

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/310434

acceptedVersion

Chapter 5

Interactive Strategic Cultures: Romania and Moldova

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Romania and Moldova are situated in the strategically important Black Sea region which has a long history of competing and clashing interests of Russia and Western powers. This location has had dramatic effect on the formulation and changes of Romanian and Moldovan strategic culture and on their unique symbiosis, a reactive inter-relatedness in security consciousness and identity. Apart from the fact that changes in either country's strategic behavior likely launch responses in the other, due to the overlapping conceptions of national identity these changes bear relevance on the domestic power-play of strategic subcultures.

Strategic culture in this article is perceived as a discursive construct. Thus, we capitalize, on the one hand, on Bloomfields' notion of the competition of different security conceptions of domestic subcultures, and on the theory of inter-subjectivity of institutional structures and identities, presented by Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane and Stephen Krasner.[1] Based on these worthy starting points, we complement the discussion with the idea of *interactive dynamics of immediate and wider regional security environments*, which are sometimes converging but often colliding, characteristically fluid contexts. In contrast to the international arena, the *immediate security environment* can be perceived as an extended national space that is situated beyond the actual state boundaries. Since the image of this territory is a central building block of identity substantiating the myth of the nation's rightful homeland,[2] threat perceptions also cover these areas. This extended spatial scope is not a buffer-zone but a core

territory of identity. We argue that this notion of the *national domain,* relying on historical reference points and emotionally loaded values, is shared by the different subcultures.

We distinguish between long-term strategic culture, which defines the principles and primary goals of national security, and short-term strategic behavior which is designed to realize the main goals of strategic culture. Thus, strategic behavior is more time bound and sensitive to transformations in the security environment. Long-term strategic culture, similarly to national identity, is not monolithic but a subject of continuous interaction and discursive co-construction. This process is based on the historical layers of threat concepts and their interpretations by different subcultures.

This analysis of strategic culture goes beyond the limited angle of military security and underlines a wider concept of security – also reflected by focal security documents and speeches. The paramount security concern of Romania and Moldova is to safeguard the territorial integrity of the nation-state. The perception of the *nation-state* in both countries is related to a) the notion of the *ideal state,* b) the *multi-ethnic* make-up of Romania and Moldova*,* and c) the transformations in these countries' *immediate and regional security environment*. We argue that while all these aspects are interlinked there is, however, an inner hierarchy where *the ideal state* appears to be the long-term consensual goal of the different political elites' subcultures. The dream of the ideal state has however not always converged historically with the *de facto* state boundaries. Hence, in order to achieve the ideal state as principal goal, strategies had to be adjusted to the domestic, regional and international contexts at any one time. The most troublesome task in the domestic context is to counter-balance the *multi-ethnic reality* with the concept of the nation-state. This aspect is also deeply connected to regional contradictions since minority issues bundle up the neighboring

countries and challenge the nation state paradigm, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. From the point of view of achieving the *ideal state*, the international context is also relevant because it provides a sometimes friendly sometimes hostile *environment* for it. Thus, while deciding on feasible and efficient strategic behavior patterns, the elites have to take into consideration *simultaneously* the domestic, regional and international contexts.

The main actor of the regional and international arena is obviously Russia. It has played a central role in how the understanding of the ideal state was created in Romania and Moldova, partly because the very existence of these countries was initially dependent on the Russian intentions around the Black Sea. For that reason, Russia tends to dominate the main threat perceptions of these countries.

The Russian Input in the Origins of State-hood

The Romanian and Moldovan bilateral relations look back on a mutually debated history. Moldova was originally part of the Romanian principality Moldavia, called Bessarabia.[3] The Romanian principalities, Moldavia and Walachia, were under Ottoman suzerainty from the 16th century. The colliding strategic interests over the Black Sea region finally culminated in the Ottoman-Russian war, which resulted in the Russian invasion of Bessarabia in 1812. From that time on, the possession of Bessarabia moved back and forth between Russia and the Romanian principality of Moldavia.

Russia grew into a significant regional player in the Black Sea area in the 19th century. While France and Britain tried to preserve the Ottoman Empire, in order to, avoid the Black Sea

region falling under Russian domination, it was increasingly turning into a wearisome endeavor. Thus, after the Crimean war (1853–1856), to counterbalance Russia, the Western powers started to support the rise of a new state: the unification of the Romanian Principalities as Romania, in 1859. The West gradually begun to favor the idea to push the Ottoman empire back to Asia Minor, thus, when Russia participated in this mission (the Balkan wars, 1877–1878), it was rewarded with Bessarabia. While the new Romanian kingdom, recognized by the international community in 1881, was becoming an important Black Sea bridgehead for Western, especially French interests, Bessarabia was expendable from the Western point of view. Romania was, however, substituted for Bessarabia with Southern Dobrogea, taken from Bulgaria, thus, acquiring a larger share of the seaside.

During the First World War, Romanian forces ended the war on the side of the victorious powers in 1918. An equally important strategic decision was the Romanian involvement in the intervention in Soviet-Russia where Romania saw the opportunity to regain Bessarabia.[4] When Soviet-type revolutions broke out in the neighboring Hungary and Slovakia, Romanian forces marched to Budapest. These strategic maneuvers were rewarded in the Versailles Peace Settlements (1919–1920) by transferring Transylvania from Hungary, and recognizing the reunification of Bessarabia with Romania.

The decision to unite with Romania was adopted in May 1918 by the Moldovan *Country Council* (Sfatul Țării) in Chisinau, putting an end to the short-lived independence of the Moldavian Republic, proclaimed in January 1918. Opinions about unification were far from unanimous. As the French consular agent in Chișinău reported:

> "… the Country Council voted with 86 votes for, 3 against and 36 abstentions (13 absent) the reunification of Bessarabia to Romania [...]

> Despite the propaganda employed and the amounts spent, there was a strong opposition. [...] the majority, in favor of the unification, was rather weak. I am convinced that the voted unification is not on the will of the majority of the population in Chisinau; or the Moldovan element is neither very large nor very active."[5]

The city of Chişinău was a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-confessional locality with the Romanians accounting for only 41% of the population, while the rest was made up of Jews (37%), Russians (17%) and a number of other nationalities, most of which regarded Russia as their motherland.[6] Lenin's speeches after the Bolshevik Revolution promising social and national freedoms nurtured hopes in Bessarabia. It opened a cleavage between the supporters of unification and the advocates of autonomy within Red or White Russia or even Ukraine.[7] Almost immediately after the unification, the *Committee for the Salvation of Bessarabia* was established to co-ordinate the activities designed to return Bessarabia to Russia.[8] The unification was also denounced by the Ukrainian authorities and both sides of the Russian civil war.

The Romanian dream of the ideal state came true but the perceptions of what might constitute an ideal state for Moldova turned out to be on a collision course with the Romanian idea.

The contradicting ideals: Greater Romania or Independent Moldova

The Greater Romania of the interwar period is still remembered in the National Security Strategy documents in the 1990s and 2000s as *the golden age* of modern societal development

relying on an active and assertive foreign policy, able to alter the immediate security environment.[9] The strategic principles and threat perceptions of the interwar period became the cornerstones of long-term strategic culture, relying on wide domestic consensus. The primary concern was to safeguard the territorial integrity of Greater Romania, thus, the main strategy was to get Western powers involved in the regional protection of the country against Soviet-Russia and the neighboring revanchist Hungary and Bulgaria.

Romania saw France as an important ally which showed after WWI a growing interest in the East Central European region. France launched a novel strategic defense system, the Little Entente, Alliance de revers and Cordon Sanitaire, combing Romania, and the new states, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The mutual aim of all these countries was to prevent border revisions, detain German influence, and stop the spread of communist experiments, which determined the Romanian-Soviet relations during the whole interwar period.[10]

Between 1919 and 1924, there appeared several attempts to oust the Romanian authorities from Bessarabia, culminating with the peasant revolt in Tatar Bunar in September 1924.[11] The following month (12 October 1924) the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee decided to establish the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a part of the Ukrainian SSR. The new Republic, which resembled with present day Transnistria, became the cradle of Moldovianism, a state-invented and state-manufactured national ideology.[12] The Romanian dialect spoken in the area was now renamed as the *Moldovan language*, and the Latin alphabet was changed into Cyrillic.

The Second World War modified the regional chessboard considerably. The Red Army seized Bessarabia in 1940 and maintained it until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. After the

WWII, Bessarabia was now recognized as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, independent from its previous host, the Ukrainian SSR. The old tsarist practice of Russification was applied during the Stalinist years, aiming to strengthen a distinct Moldovan identity in order to ensure that Romania could not reclaim this area ever again. The ethnic make-up was altered radically by moving Russian population in.[13] Ethnic Russians became the trusted political elite with central economic positions governing the indigenous population.

The communist take-over in the aftermath of the WWII had severe impact on Romanian development as well. National interest, let alone the dreams of Greater Romania had to be buried in the Eastern Bloc, at least during the Stalinist years. In 1958, the withdrawal of the Soviet army troops from Romanian soil eventually transformed the situation and the communist leadership launched a new independence-seeking foreign policy line. This culminated in 1968 with the Warsaw Pact's military intervention in Czechoslovakia that the Nicolae Ceausescu administration (1965–1989) publicly condemned and declared a new security doctrine: the defense of Romania's territorial integrity by the entire people (i.e., enrolling women into the army).[14] From that time on, Romania became a maverick and strong opponent of Soviet interests, earning thus the support of the United States. These special ties with the USA were reawakened in the post-communist period and a strategic partnership was established in 1997.[15] In the 1980s, however, the independence-seeking Ceausescu-line turned equally against Western criticism of human rights violations in communist Romania – that was interpreted as interference in domestic matters. Eventually, this turned into the international isolation of the country.

Interlinked with the drive for independence and detachment from the control of Moscow and the Eastern Bloc, the Ceausescu regime developed a unique nationalist communist system and kept hence the national sentiment alive. After the collapse of communism in 1989, the majority of the new parties grouped up with the old, Greater Romania dream, inherited from the interwar period.[16] There was even a new political force called the 'Greater Romania Party' that grew into the second largest party by the parliamentary elections in 2000.

Moldova unfortunately did not share a common national sentiment with Romania but developed its own. The Stalinist nation-building formula actually worked so well that by the time of the dissolution of the USSR, the Moldovans wanted to remain independent. This attitude interestingly did not change over the decades: according to an opinion poll in 2018, still only 25 % of the population voted for reunification with Romania.[17] In August 1991, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova changed its name to the Republic of Moldova and it seemed for a moment that the Moldovan ideal state now became a reality. The Transnistrians were however unhappy with the new situation the disintegrating Soviet Union created for them. The conflict itself revealed the fundamental problem of this region: multiethnic composition not only threatened the territorial integrity of the countries and undermined the nation-state driven aspirations, but even more importantly, it offered Russia the pretext to interfere and destabilize the domestic power balance.

Multi-ethnic challenge of territorial integrity

The biggest internal threat to these multiethnic countries has been the principle of self-determination based on ethnic grounds – an underlying concern which Russia was traditionally well aware of, and Moldova was historically an easy target.

Bessarabia of the interwar period had a mixed population out of which only 56% were Romanians, over a third Slavonic (13% Russian, 12% Ukrainian, 6% Bulgarian, etc.) and 7% Jewish. This composition resembled, on the one hand, the differences in ethnicity, languages and identities of the Western parts of the Russian Empire, but also the Russification policy which was well under way before the Bolshevik revolution.[18] After the reunification with Greater Romania, the Bolshevik leadership of Soviet Russia made attempts to stir a revolutionary movement in Romania by exploiting the independence-seekers and Slavonic ethnic groups in Bessarabia.[19] Furthermore, both the Komintern and the Balkan Communist Federation openly advocated the disintegration of Romania, considered as a multi-national state, by returning Bessarabia and attributing Bucovina to Soviet Russia, annexing Dobrogea to Bulgaria and Transylvania to Hungary – based on the idea of self-determination of the nations.[20]

Ironically, after WWII and the communist take-over in Eastern Europe, the Soviet policy started to discourage the principle of self-determination, which suited well also the new communist regime in Romania. As mentioned earlier, especially the Ceausescu administration furthered national unity and institutionalized Romanian nationalism based on the idea of one homogeneous nation.[21] After the communist collapse in 1989, the national ideology, designed during state socialism, survived serving now the purposes of the Greater Romania plan.

On the eve of the systemic change and the break-up of the USSR in 1990, Moldovan society began debating the future scenarios of the identity of the state. The core question was should Moldova remain independent or reunite with Romania. The Popular Front, which was previously a movement supporting Gorbatchev's Perestroika, became the central political force during the change of power, 1989–1990. The Popular Front campaigned for reintroducing Romanian as the official language and returning to the Latin alphabet. The radical wing of the Front even advocated for reunification with Romania. The Popular Front acquired 40 % in the first parliamentary elections in March 1990 and thus became the major political force in the country. The new symbols of the state, adopted by the Parliament in April 1990, closely resembled the Romanian flag, coat of arms and national anthem. These were threatening signs from the Russian minority's point of view.

The Transnistrians claimed that the Unionist wing was becoming a dominant force within the Popular Front and driving a quick reunification. The Transnistrian population was more mixed than any other part of Moldova: combining an almost equally third share of Moldovans (Romanians), Russians and Ukrainians. The previous communist regime had guaranteed the Russians' leading positions in political and economic life. It was obvious that the Russians were about to lose their power-positions, even if Moldova stayed independent from Romania. Hence, the Transnistrian still communist leadership exploited the Moldovan debates and the Russian minority's sense of insecurity and declared the secession in June 1990, with the new name of the *Dnestr Moldovan Republic* (Transnistria or Pridnestrovje).[22]

Two years of violent war followed between uneven forces: the new Moldovan Republic, lacking yet a national army and relying on police forces, faced the 14th Soviet Army, still in Moldovan territory, siding with the ethnic Russian separatists. The ceasefire was finally

signed in June 1992 – emblematically by the Moldovan and Russian presidents. Russian 'peacekeeping' troops, however, stayed in Transnistria, bearing consequence on Moldova's security perceptions and territorial integrity. The Transnistrian power elite, on the other hand, confident in Russian support, has had a strong negotiating position and much less incentives to reach compromise.

The problem of Transnistria is a core question in the Moldovan strategic culture, affecting central debates amongst subcultures and causing continuous fluctuations in strategic behavior. Indirectly, the Transnistria-issue modified the security considerations and national interest also in Romania. Transnistria is generally referred to as a 'frozen conflict' and compared to other similar examples in post-Soviet regions, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and Ossetia, and lately to the Crimea, where characteristically Russia has been taking advantage of unresolved minority disputes in relatively small countries.[23]

Multilevel-game in the security environment

Post-communist democratic transition created enormous political and social challenges for Romania, affecting also the priorities of security assessment. The problem was that after the isolationist policy of the Ceausescu regime in the 1980s, the complete web of foreign relations had to be re-established. It was actually a unique setback in comparison to other post-communist East Central European countries that were able to develop lasting relations especially with the West already in the communist era. It was also obvious that new alignment would inevitably influence the identity of the country. Some scholars claim that the Romanian strategic culture underwent a decisive transformation by the dedicated Euro-

Atlanticism.[24] We argue, however, that what appeared to be a significant turn was actually consistent with the long-term strategic culture aiming to secure the territorial integrity of the nation and restore Greater Romania. What has changed was mostly strategic behavior that became innovative and bold, although oscillating somewhat with the political attachments of the different administrations' subcultures.

The changes in the immediate security environment in the Balkans had vital effects on the Romanian Euro-Atlantic orientation from the mid-1990s onwards. The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia was a threatening example of what the failure of a multiethnic state could cause. In addition, the Hungarian national-conservative administrations (1990–1994, 1998–2002, 2010–) openly supported territorial autonomy for the Hungarian minority (about 8 % of the population) living in Transylvania and granted double citizenship in 2010.[25] Thus, these regional threats were reflected in the first security document in 1991 where *national security* meant primarily internal social peace and political stability of the multiethnic state.[26] The Romanian administrations, although strongly anchored in the national agenda (1990–1996), started to develop a new strategic behavior pattern, designed to preserve territorial integrity and the precept of the unity of the nation. The main principle was to get the regional and the wider international environments to overlap: thus, the task ahead was to magnify the Romanian security concerns in a way that important Western allies would equally realize these worries as general common threats for all in the alliance.

The first new strategy was *The Integrated Concept on National Security of Romania* in 1994. This document was still inconclusive as to whether Romania would fully integrate with Western institutions or continue to balance between East and West.[27] This hesitation was partly due to the fact that the Iliescu-administration (1990–1996) was characteristically the

successor of the communist party, hence, the central security conceptions were still anchored to those traditional institutions and areas where the communist-time diplomacy was successful. Thus, particularly the United Nations, but also the renewed OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) with the Charter of Paris for a New Europe stood out as the cornerstones of Romanian security. The strength of these institutions was based on their multilateral negotiating power which provided a safe arena for the smaller states to be heard. Yet, these institutions were unable to offer security guarantees for the individual states. The Romanian administration started to search for more credible security-provider institutions, and signed in January 1994 'The Partnership for Peace Program' to follow the trends of European, and particularly regional developments of the time.

Following the 1996 elections, which ousted the ex/post-communist party from power and finally speeded up the transition to a Western type of democratization, the strategic goals changed accordingly. During the period of Emil Constantinescu's presidency (1996–2000) the Center-Right governments embarked on a definite Western path, which led the to the country's integration to the NATO (2004) and the EU (2007). In addition to the drive to the Euro-Atlantic communities, the Romanian leadership accentuated the special importance of bilateral relations with the US by establishing the "Strategic partnership" with the US (since 1997) as the third most important guarantor of the country's integrity. After the accession to the NATO and ensuring the continuity of strong bilateral relations with the US,[28] the security-focus changed: concentrating now on the regional framework.[29] The recalibration of national interest and the new strategic orientation was revealed in the National Defense Strategy in 2010, emphasizing also Romania's pro-active international role.[30] The Romanian strategic behavior, indeed, evolved especially in the Black Sea area.

The current National Strategy for 2015–2019, subtitled as '*A strong Romania in Europe and the world'*, underlined the same development.[31] While reassuring the Western orientation as an important security objective it, nevertheless, returned to accentuating again the Black Sea Region. The key goal to consolidate regional security was by promoting relations with countries situated on the Eastern belt of the NATO. Concerns over the increasingly instable area led to the re-evaluation of the *relative weight* of available security-provider institutions for strategic interests. Thus, NATO and particularly the USA are estimated as primarily important for Romanian security, favored markedly over other institutions such as the EU, UN and the OSCE.[32] Romania has been eager to group up with NATO-views already during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and addressed full commitment to the non-recognition policy with regard to the Russian annexation of the Crimea. The recent crisis in the vicinity of Romania lends a stronger role to the country to be played out skillfully in the Black Sea region. The aim to become the leading state in the area is dependent on the loyal and reliable image of Romania in front of its major Western allies. Strategic trustworthiness is, however, not necessarily sufficient. The unfavorable reputation of the democracy problems, centralization of power, erosion of the rule of law and corruption scandals of the current left-wing administration (in power since 2016) may likely affect Western attitudes towards Romanian strategic goals.[33]

The focal importance of the Black Sea in the Romanian security perceptions is mainly rooted in and influenced by the troubled history of Romanian-Soviet relations. Officially, the USSR was Romania's neighbor on the Dniester between 1922 and 1940 and on the Prut from 1940 to 1941 and from 1944 to 1991. The annexation of Bessarabia in 1940 and the communist take-over following the WWII, in addition to the subsequent clashes between Communist Romania and the Soviet leadership from the 1960s onwards, left an unassailable mark on the

strategic culture. Despite customary tensions generated by the status of Romanian minorities in Ukraine, all the political parties are aware of the fact that having a sovereign Ukraine at the country's Eastern border and keeping Moldova gravitating around Romania provides a better security environment than adjoining the Russian Federation.

Current Romanian relations with Ukraine are based on the 1997 bilateral treaty which was signed despite the ardent criticism from the nationalist parties of both sides. The ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine since 2014 induced new Romanian enthusiasm for increasing the presence of NATO. Simultaneously, the relations especially with the US became very cordial. Furthermore, Romania started to approach other countries situated in the 'threat belt', in other words, in the vicinity of Russia: the Baltic countries and Poland. The *Polish Trimarium incentive*,[34] aiming to construct a new type of collaboration between the states around the Baltic Sea, Black Sea and Adriatic Sea received wide support in Romania, relying on a rare consensus of different political forces.

'One nation two states': Romanian Diaspora-politics

In the heated and formative years of 1989–1990, when Nicolae Ceaușescu's national-communists were ousted from power in Romania and the Republic of Moldova separated from the USSR, debates ensued about the re-unification of the two countries. Romania was the first state to officially recognize the independence of Moldova, thus, no common strategy was devised to follow in the footsteps of German reunification. Grass-root initiatives emerged though, such as the mass-demonstration along the bank of the Prut river, separating Romania and Moldova, in May 1990 called „the Bridge of Flowers" ('podul de flori'). These public

statements, however, did not affect the decision-makers in Bucharest and Chișinău. By 1994, Moldova gradually abandoned the unification orientation of its foreign policy and tried to adapt to new regional and European developments.[35]

A Bessarabian by birth, the liberal President Emil Constantinescu (1996–2000) failed to devise a foreign policy concept capable of enhancing the relations with the Republic of Moldova, although at times, members of his coalition and nationalist opposition parties, such as the Greater Romania Party led by the extremist Corneliu Vadim Tudor, continued to harbour unionist feelings. President Constantinescu repeatedly called for the withdrawal of the 14th Russian Army from Transnistria, for example. There is, nevertheless, a gradual change of heart in this matter. From 1999 on, the Romanian strategy-documents contained concerns about Moldova as a founding pillar of strategic interest.[36] Furthering close bilateral relations has relied on strong consensus among the different political parties and thus the changes of administrations have not affected this mutual agreement over primary national interest. Already in 2001, the successor President Traian Băsescu, initiated with his Moldovan counterpart a strategic partnership aiming at EU integration of the Republic of Moldova.[37] Following the NATO and the EU accession, Romania started to build a more coherent policy towards Moldova.

Still, it was only as late as 2009 when the Romanian interests met a more favourable reception in Moldova to facilitate the obtaining of Romanian citizenship by Moldovan applicants – resulting in 800,000 Moldovans acquiring Romanian citizenship almost immediately. Various agreements paved the way for this policy in the fields transportation, energy, education, culture, in addition to numerous funding schemes channelled to local administrations' projects. Still, the Romanian administration has acknowledged the fact that a quarter of the

total population of Moldova would support the unification with Romania, while more than 60% would vote against it.[38]

Romania is, however, at the crossroads. Nationalist organizations in Romania and Moldova support reunification, while the liberal pro-EU parties in both countries vote for the idea of one nation in two states, also within the EU. On the other hand, Moldova is divided between left-wing and communist pro-Russian parties, represented now by the current President Igor Dodon (in office since 2016), and the liberal pro-European government. Thus, the unification prospect seems as distant as ever while the European integration is perhaps a chimera. This is reflected in the Romanian National Strategy issued for 2015–2019, where special regard is given to the bonds with the Republic of Moldova, but they are defined rather in the meaning of two Romanian states in a common European Union than in terms of state unification as in 1918.[39] Nevertheless, a special National Strategy addressing the Romanian diaspora was also created in May 2017 for the period of 2017–2020.[40] The Romanian-speaking population living abroad displays diversity in their relations to the Romanian state. On one hand, there are Romanian communities with historical bonds with the ancient Principality of Moldova – combining the citizens of the present Republic of Moldova, Northern Bukovina and Southern Bessarabia, now parts of Ukraine. An equally important group is the so-called Vlachs' communities living in the neighboring Balkan countries, in Serbia, Greece or Bulgaria with no direct bonds to the Romanian state.[41] The National strategy lists four key objectives designed to keep up, develop and affirm the Romanian identity of diasporas, consolidate the Romanian organizations abroad, and defend their rights in their host countries.

The Moldovan Ideal State Between Russia and the West

The changing Moldovan administrations have been painstakingly aware of the fact that their country is the subject of clashing interests of Russia and the EU, with a mutually exclusive effort to integrate the country either to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union or by signing the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement offered by the EU.[42] From the Moldovan point of view, the leading elite is hesitant because proceeding with the Eastern Partnership scheme of the EU can cause difficulties in the relationship with Russia. A reminder of how severe the effects can be, came in 2014 when Moldova joined the EU's sanctions towards Russia due to the Ukraine-crisis. Russia reacted instantly by banning Moldovan agricultural products and refusing to renew work permits for Moldovan employees working in Russia.[43] Migrating to work to other countries (Russia and the EU) and sending financial aid back home is a significant economic asset for the poorest country in Europe. The Word Bank estimates that in 2014 almost 25 percent of Moldova's GDP was formed by the remittances of the migrant workers.[44]

These actions revealed the wider security concerns related to economic relations. Besides obvious security concerns, Russia nevertheless is an important trade partner and energy supplier for Moldova. Actually, Russia is Moldova's second largest export destination after Romania, although approximately 62 % of Moldovan export goes to the EU.[45] Moldova's energy consumption is about 95 percent dependent on Russian supplies. To counterbalance this unfavorable position, the current pro-West Government (in office since 2014) launched a new strategy to increase the share of renewable energy resources up to 20 percent of total consumption by the 2020, relying on EU funds in the endeavor.[46] This difficult in-between position, divided by dependencies and interests, can create extra pressures for Moldova when a crisis situation emerges in the immediate security environment. The growing threats due to

the continuing heated war in the Donbass and the seizure of the Crimea led to a peculiar political solution in 2016. The pro-Russian Igor Dodon was elected as president in November 2016 while the Government is furthering a characteristically pro-Western policy.[47]

Moldovan strategic behavior has been testing new patterns to find ways to come to terms with Transnistrian leadership. Trade between the two started to grow particularly after Moldova signed the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU in 2014.[48] Transnistria became eager to take advantage and be incorporated to the Moldovan deal, which was in fact successful because between 2014 and 2016, the Transnistrian export grew over 70 % with Moldova and the EU. Similarly, in 2016, 38 percent of Transnistria's export went to Russia or to Eurasian Economy Union whereas 57 percent was directed to the EU.[49] Thus, especially trade interactions revealed the 'behind the scenes' -type of negotiations between Moldova and Transnistria – trying to avoid Russian interference. In contrast to the continuous rivalry between the domestic pro-Russian and pro-Western political forces in Moldova, Transnistria is while outspokenly pro-Russian, nevertheless, it is showing economic pragmatism. Transnistria joined the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement with the EU in 2016.[50] By cooperating with both Russia and the West, Transnistria is trying to strengthen the territory's economic performance and thus its de facto independent standing.

The Moldovan political elite has been divided on the Transnistrian case. The nationalist parties are opposed to any economic concessions and would be happy to get rid of Transnistria, and reunify with Romania. Other more liberal pro-West parties have feared that Transnistrian economic collapse and social unrest would re-activate Russian influence thus they would prefer a long-term strategy and gradual reintegration first on economic grounds –

a type of economic convergence and Europeanisation. This scenario has been in line with the EU policy.

An EU-driven Europeanization-agenda has been applied since 2004 within the framework of Eastern Partnership program. The EU, with the assistance of the lobbying effort of Romania, has developed new strategies to support grass roots interaction and hence confidence between Moldovans and Transnistrians by improving local businesses, employment opportunities and infrastructure.[51] With the 2016 elections of both the new pro-Russian Moldovan president, Igor Dodon, and the similarly new and pro-Russian Transnistrian president Vadim Krasnoselsky, an unexpected scenario emerged for rapprochement.[52]

The ongoing Ukrainian war and the Russian occupation of the Crimea, however, changed the situation for this conflict and strengthened the Moldovan threat-perceptions.[53] Until the war there existed no common border between Transnistria and Russia, which is why the role of Ukraine was central for the frozen conflict of Transnistria. There is also a considerable Ukrainian minority living in Moldova and therefore Ukraine furthered the recognition of Moldova's integrity. Thus, Ukraine would likely support the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria. The Donbas, the breakaway provinces of Eastern Ukraine, on the other hand, now provide a land-connection between Russia and Transnistria, which is why lately also Romania started to monitor the situation with new interest. The strengthening military presence of Russia in the Black Sea area is a security threat that surpassed Romania's traditional worries about Moldova, and brought the problem right to its own doorstep.

Russia has multiplied its efforts influencing both Moldovan and Transnistrian policy because the Black Sea is increasingly significant for the emerging Eurasianist power. From the

Russian point of view however the Black Sea region is seen as a sphere of East-West competition due to the presence of the EU, and most importantly the NATO. Thus, the strategic importance of Transnistria is rising. In addition to Russian investments, trading options with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union have been tempting, especially for the Moldovan communist and left-wing parties. The vicinity of Russia also plays against the advantages offered by the EU. Furthermore, the EU has shown signs of helplessness in pressuring Russia in the continuing crisis in Ukraine and in regard to the annexation of the Crimea. Russia wants to distract any rapprochement between Transnistria and the EU – Russian nationalists take it as a betrayal. At the same time, Russia is driving a federalization of Moldova that would give the Transnistrian separatists the right to veto any Moldovan overtures towards the West, particularly the NATO.

The Moldovan and Transnistrian fluctuating interplay reveals changes in the immediate security environment that affects the sometimes relatively quick transformations in the strategic behavior.

Conclusion

The Romania and Moldova display a peculiar example of the *in-between strategic cultures* discussed in this volume. In this article we demonstrated that the distinctiveness of these cases is basically a consequence of two interlinked aspects: on the one hand, regionally these countries are forced to play a special multilevel game, and secondly, they are in a uniquely close and continuous interaction with each other. The immediate security environment thus

consists of both the Black Sea area in general and the special interconnected neighborhood of these states, in particular.

Multilevel Game in the Black Sea Area

Geopolitically Romania and Moldova are situated on a strategic hotspot, in the Black Sea area. Changes in the long-term strategic culture and short-term strategic behavior in both countries are affected by the diverging historical goals of Russia and the Western powers in the Black Sea area. It is a special in-between space because it is a particularly crisis-prone region where Russian and Western interests are likely to collide. For Russia, it is its immediate neighborhood, a territory that for about two centuries used to belong, in notable part, to its sphere of influence, although Ukraine lately has acted as an important buffer between. From the Western point of view, the Black Sea is a strategically important cross-road to the Middle East, especially for the NATO, but also for the EU an access to Eastern trade and even possible energy resources.

The strategic culture of Romania and Moldova has had to develop a remarkable balance between these bipolar forces of great powers. Integrity, however has been greatly dependent also on another regional factor, the interwoven concepts of the *ideal state*, which are also in collision. On the other hand, the Romanian concept would include the Republic of Moldova, irrespective of its multiethnic composition, which characterize also Romania itself. The Republic of Moldova, on the other hand, wants to maintain integrity but its notion of the ideal state contains the break-away region of Transnistria.

The *ideal state* constitutes the core identity of these nations and primary national interest, based on rare political consensus. The curiosity of this situation is that Romanian and Moldovan strategic cultures' goals are to realize their national interest in the above-mentioned space of gravity of juxta-positioned great powers. Due to the special crisis-tendency characteristic of the Black Sea area, this gravity is much more intensive than in most other in-between areas. Hence, these countries' strategic cultures are calibrated to simultaneously play a multilevel game. It means that in peacetime, the agenda of the ideal state gets translated into an innovative use of the diverging objectives of the East and the West for the country's own ends. In times of crisis, such as the contemporary one in Ukraine, however, the dream of the ideal state gives way to a more pragmatic policy of preserving the de facto state's integrity. Hence, the topic of the ideal state is downplayed and marginalized in public and strategic discourses. This alone provides a fairly accurate litmus paper of the sense of security that affects strategic behavior.

Modus Operandi of Interactive Relations

The particular interactive nature of the relations between Romania and Moldova bears huge relevance on how these countries' strategic culture is formulated and what kind of strategic behavior models they choose to implement strategic goals. The fluctuating mental distance between these countries and changing patterns of integrity and belongingness are coded in gradual transformation of strategic culture. The intersecting concepts of the ideal state carry a special susceptibility to change. Transformations in any one target area, that is considered as the territory of the ideal state, tend to modify strategic thinking with the outcome of revising strategic behavior. In times of security breach or direct crisis on the regional level, this

interconnectedness becomes even more conspicuous launching an immediate chain reaction affecting threat perceptions and altering behavior patterns. This kind of practical interactivity is derived from the fact that the ideal state is understood as an *extended national domain.* A security hazard in the terrain of the ideal state constitutes a peril for one's own integrity. What is striking in the applied strategic behavior model of both countries is that they try to take full advantage of their in-between position in this geopolitically important area of the Black Sea, targeted by the clashing interests of great powers. It seems that the strategic behavior pattern consists of fast reactivity to changes in the extended national domain and in the immediate security environment, and includes also a special ability to link the regional worries with wider international concerns.

It has also become obvious that Russia is well aware of the unique interactive nature of these countries relations. Russia has been able to take advantage especially of the multiethnic composition of these countries and use it as a lever stirring up political opposition and even grass-root level unrest to curb pro-West enthusiasm. The importance of this region, once a Soviet/Russian sphere of influence, has grown again in significance due to the prolonged Ukrainian crisis. It provided a pretext to increase Russian presence in the Black Sea area. This alone expands the leverage of EU-Romania and Moldova vis-à-vis the West. Therefore, paramount security considerations of strategic culture, such as the dream of the ideal state, have been successfully externalized from time to time, to be shared by influential international actors. Thus, greater players of the international arena (NATO, EU, USA, Russia) represent instrumental value for Romania and Moldova.

Notes:

[1] Alan Bloomfield, "Time to Move on: Reconceptualizing the Strategic Culture Debate," *Contemporary Security Policy 33*, no. 3 (2012): 451–56; Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security," in *The Culture of National Security: Norm and Identity in World Politics,* ed. Peter Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 17–25; Peter Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics," *International Organization 52*, no. 4 (1998): 645–85.

[2] George Schöpflin, "The functions of myths and taxonomy of myths," in Myths and Nationhood, ed. G. Hosking and G. Schöpflin (London: Hurst, 1997): 19–35.

[3] The name is originated from the late 14th century when the prince Bessarab of Walachia took over the Southern Moldavian territory.

[4] Romania was a Central Power ally in the WWI until early 1918 and the Central Powers envisaged to turn Romanian aspirations towards the East on the expense of Russia.

[5] "Pierre Sarret's report of 30 March / 12 Aprilie 1918," in *Documente străine despre Basarabia şi Bucovina 1918-1944,* eds. Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu and Ion Pătroiu (Bucureşti: Vremea, 2003), 25–6.

[6] *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 Decemvrie 1930, Vol. II, Neam, limbă maternă, religie, Partea I, Neam, limbă maternă* (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), 268.

[7] Ştefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei: studiu şi documente cu privire la mişcarea naţionala din Basarabia în anii 1917–1918* (Iaşi: Alfa, 2001).

[8] Ludmila Rotari, *Mişcarea subversivă din Basarabia în anii 1918–1924* (Bucureşti: Enciclopedică, 2004), 69.

[9] For example, National Security Strategy 1999, *Monitorul Oficial* 289 din 23 Iunie 1999 or National Security Strategy 2001. Accessed February 24, 2018. http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?idt=31060. See also Cristian Preda, *România postcomunistă si România interbelică* (Bucuresti: Institutul de Certari Politice, 2002).

[10] *Relațiile–Româno-Sovietice documente, vol. 1, 1917–1934* (Bucuresti, Editura Enciclopedică, 1999), doc. 3, 7.

[11] Gheorghe Tătărescu, *Mărturii pentru istorie* (București: Enciclopedică, 1996), 102–5.

[12] Gheorghe Cojocaru, *Cominternul şi originile „moldovenismului"* (Civitas, Chișinău, 2012), 26–7.

[13] The 1989 Soviet census revealed that of 4.3 million people, Moldovans (Romanians) accounted for 2,794,749 (64.5%), Ukrainians for 600,366 (13.8%), Russians for 562, 069 (13.0%), Gagauz for 153,458 (3.5%), Bulgarians for 88,419 (2.0%), and a tiny Jewish population (1.5%). Trevor Waters, "Problems, Progress and Prospects in a Post-Soviet Borderland: The Republic of Moldova," *Boundary and security bulletin*, 5, no. 1 (1997): 72.

[14] Elena Dragomir, *Cold War Perceptions: Romania's Policy Change Towards the Soviet Union 1960–1964,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

[15] William J. Clinton, *Remarks to the Citizens of Bucharest, Romania*. Last modified July 11, 1997. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54402

[16] Between 1990 and 1996 the Social Democratic Party (with Ion Iliescu as PM), established on the ruins of the communist party, was in power creating thus a certain ideological continuity with its predecessor.

[17] Doru Petruţi and Viorelia Zaharco, *Barometrul Socio-Politic*. Last modified February 2018. http://imas.md/pic/archives/9/Barometrul%20Socio-Politic_Februarie%202018.pdf

[18] *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decemvrie 1930, Vol. II, Populația pe neamuri* (București: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), XXVI.

[19] Ion Constantin, *România, Marile Puteri și problema Basarabiei* (București: Enciclopedică, 1995), 20; Rotari, "*Mișcarea,"* 52–3.

[20] Rotari, "*Mișcarea,"* 154–5.

[21] Roger Brubaker, "Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism," in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. J. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 272–305; Kathrine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-Socialist Romania," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 2 (1993): 179–203.

[22] Bill Bowring, „Transnistria," in *Self-Determination and Secession in International Law,* ed. C.Walter et al. (Oxford University Press, 2014): 157–74.

[23] According to a general definition, a frozen conflict is a situation in which active armed conflict has been ended, but there is no peace treaty or other political solution achieved that would satisfy the parties and end the conflict.

[24] Iulia-Sabina Joja, „Reflections on Romania's Role Conception in National Strategic Documents 1990–2014" *Europolity* 9, no.1 (2015): 89–111; Mircea Micu, "Romania", in Strategic Cultures in Europe, ed. Biehl, et al, (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013): 293–305; Mircea Micu, "Romania", in National Perspectives on Russia, ed. M. David et al, (New York – London: Routledge, 2015): 197–208.

[25] See for instance the statement of Deputy PM Zsolt Semjén in 2016 about the government's support of evolving autonomous stand of all Hungarian minorities in the neighboring states, http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/hirek/minden-jo-ami-kozelebb-visz-a-kulhoni-magyarsag-autonomia-torekveseinek-megvalositasahoz ; also the Legislation: 2011. évi XIV Törvény in *Törvények és OGY határozatok* https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/?page=show&docid=a1100014.TV

[26] Legea 51/1991 privind sigurante nationala a Romaniei, in Monitorul Oficial nr. 163 din 8 iuliei 1991.

[27] Larry Watts, "The transformation of Romanian civil-military relations. Enabling force projection," in *Civil-Military Relations in Post-Communist Europe: Reviewing the Transition*, edited by Timothy Edmunds and Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 98.

[28] Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century Between the United States of America and Romania, http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2011-09-14-10126005-0-parteneriatul-strategic-romania-sua-eng.pdf

[29] National Security Strategy 2007. Accessed February 24, 2018. http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SSNR/SSNR.pdf;

[30] National Defense Strategy 2010. Accessed February 24, 2018. http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SNAp/SNAp.pdf; Iulia-Sabina Joja, "Reflections on Romania's Role Conception in National Strategic Documents 1990–2014" *Europolity* 9, no.1 (2015): 102–7.

[31] National Security Strategy 2015, Accessed March 18, 2018. http://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_1.pdf.

[32] *Romania – United States Strategic Partnership*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed March 18, 2018. https://www.mae.ro/en/node/42485

[33] Anca Gurzu, "Romanian PM clashes with Comission over the rule of law," in *Politico* October 4, 2018. Accessed December 18, 2018. https://www.politico.eu/article/romanian-prime-minister-viorica-dancila-clashes-with-commission-over-rule-of-law/

[34] See more about this subject in the Visegrad chapter of this book.

[35] Kamil Całus, *The unfinished state. 25 years of independent Moldova* (Warsaw: OSW STUDIES, 2016), 65–6.

[36] National Security Strategy 1999, *Monitorul Oficial* 289 din 23 Iunie 1999.

[37] Declaration of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and Moldova, accessed March 19, 2018. http://www.mfa.gov.md/img/docs/0001739.pdf.

[38] Barometrul Socio-Politic 2018, *IMAS*, last modified February 28, 2018. http://imas.md/pic/archives/9/Barometrul%20Socio-Politic_Februarie%202018.pdf.

[39] National Security Strategy 2015. Accessed March 18, 2018. http://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_1.pdf.

[40] National strategy for Romanians living abroad 2017–2020, accessed March 18, 2018. http://www.dprp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HOT%C4%82R%C3%82RE-nr.-405-din-31-mai-2017.pdf.

[41] In addition, a significantly growing group consists of Romanians in Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Partly due to the migratory flow motivated mostly by a strive for economic and social security, this is the largest subgroup of diaspora. A recent estimation of the Research and Documentation Center for Integration of Immigrants puts the figure of this subgroup to as high as 3.4 million only for the period 2007–2017.

[42] Laure Delcour, ”Between the Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Inegration: Explainin Post-Soviet Countries’ Engagement in Competing Region-Building Projects”, *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 6 (2015): 316.

[43] Tyler Durden, “Kremlin Gains Two More European Allies As Bulgaria, Moldova Elect Pro-Russian Presidents”, last modified November 14, 2016. http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-11-14/kremlin-gains-two- more-european-allies-bulgaria-moldova-elect-pro-russian-presidents; Theodor Tudoroiu, ”Unfreezing Failed Frozen Conflicts: A Post-Soviet Case Study,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 24, no. 3

(2016): 378.

[44] Liza Yanovic, "Children Left Behind: The Impact of Labor Migration in Moldova and Ukraine," *Migrant Policy Institute,* last modified January 23, 2015. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/children-left-behind-impact-labor-migration-moldova-and-ukraine

[45] The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2016. Moldova. Accessed March 18, 2018. http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mda/#Destinations. European Commission 2016. Trade. Countries and Regions. http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/moldova/

[46] United Nations Development Programme 2016 [1], *In Moldova, Big Plans for Biomass.* Accessed January 26, 2018. http://www.undp.org/content/brussels/en/home/ourwork/climate-and-disaster- resilience/successstories/undp-eu-support-moldova-energy-biomass.html

[47] Radio Free Europe, "Moldovan president says 'strategic partnership' with Russia is essential," last modified January 23, 2017. https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-dodon-strategic-partnership-russia-/28251575.html

[48] It was ratified in 2016.

[49] Mihail Popsoi, [2], "Transnistria: Change of Leadership, But Not Policy," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13, no. 198 (2016). https://jamestown.org/program/transnistria-change-leadership-not- policy/

[50] Kamil Calus, "The DCFTA in Transnistria: Who gains?" *New Eastern Europe.* 2016. http://neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1861-the-dcfta-in-transnistria-who-gains

[51] United Nations Development Programme 2016 [2], *Support to Confidence Development Programme (V). Project Document.* Accessed March 18, 2018. http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/operations/projects/inclusive_growth/con f idence-building-measures-programme-1.html; Popsoi, "Transnistria," 2016 [2]

[52] Alexandru Lesanu, "Transnistria's presidential election: A hard-fought contest with no punches pulled, as Russia diverts its attention from the unrecognised state," Website: London School of Economics and Political Science. 2016. Last modified December 23, 2016. http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/12/23/transnistrias- presidential-election/;

[53] Tudoroiu, "Unfreezing," 2016.

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